

SECRET

*Noted by DCI
at Tuesday lunch*

17 September 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comments on Thieu's Analysis of Enemy Strategy

1. President Thieu's analysis of current enemy strategy, 78.24 (reported by Ambassador Bunker in Saigon Embassy Telegram 37284) can be summarized as follows:

a. The enemy is now focussing on expanding his control in the countryside, while holding Allied forces in and near the urban areas.

b. His resources preclude any more ambitious effort. He will seek to give the impression he is strong enough to keep up the military struggle, but will in reality be enhancing his position in rural areas in anticipation of a ceasefire.

c. This situation will continue for several months pending the inauguration of a new administration in the U.S.

2. In essence, our adversaries' vaunted "third offensive" now seems to have been more modest in execution (if not intent) than the field anticipated. Its impact has been appreciably diluted by General Abrams' really skillful spoiling actions and counteroperations which minimized our losses while exacting a high toll on the enemy. We believe the Communists will pursue a relatively low-risk military course over the next several months, trying to keep our forces tied up and "busy" while consolidating their position in the countryside. This modest military pressure will be accompanied by intensive terrorism in the cities, as well as political and subversive pressures. In Paris, the North Vietnamese may try to demonstrate some reasonableness and tactical flexibility in an effort to ease us into a bombing halt, but they probably are not overly sanguine about the prospects during the remaining months of this administration.

State Department review completed

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

3. We are in general agreement with Thieu's analysis, which is in line with a 16 September ONE memorandum. Our adversaries seem to be moving into a period of marking time -- maintaining modest pressures on all fronts, but cautiously husbanding their military resources pending an opening on one front or another. They will probably take a long look at the situation after our elections, the outcome of which will strongly influence the timing and thrust of their next military and diplomatic moves.

4. Though Thieu is probably basically right, his analysis is a shade too comfortable. Our adversaries are waiting for a break and, in keeping up the pressure, are trying to hold down their losses. They are trying to develop a situation they can exploit, however, and should they find a chink in the Allied position (e.g., be able to slip small units into Saigon), they will move swiftly and sharply to take advantage of any such opening.

25X1 [redacted] GACarver/mee 17Sept68 /

Distribution [redacted]

Orig - DCI/ [redacted]

1 - GAC Chrono

1 - VAS Chrono

1 - VAS/RAC

1 - Memos TO and FROM DCI file ✓

25X1

SECRET